

Tri-City August unemployment **START** hits 6-year high

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Nonfarm employment continued to drop last month, inflating the Tri-City jobless rate to its highest level for August since 1989.

Overall, the Tri-City unemployment rate in August was 7.4 percent, compared with 5 percent a year ago. In 1989, the rate for the month was 8.5 percent.

Statewide, the unemployment rate in August stood unchanged since July at 5.7 percent, compared with 5.4 percent a year ago, the state Employment Security Department said Tuesday.

In the Tri-Cities, there were 4,100 fewer workers last month than in

August 1994, a 5.5 percent drop from the 75,000 workers in the same period last year.

Farm employment dropped by 900 from July to August for a total of 10,500 workers. A year ago, 11,900 people had jobs on the farm, the department said.

The marked dip in employment contrasts sharply with the Tri-City job sector a year ago.

In 1994, the Tri-Cities was in an enviable position, said Dean Schau, regional economist for the department. An economic boom brought about by a work force at Hanford that totaled 18,131 pushed the Tri-Cities jobless rate far below the state average.

"A year ago, we were leading the

TRI-CITY AREA JOBS

	Aug. '94	July '95	Aug. '95	% change over y.
Nonfarm	75,000	71,200	70,900	-5.
Hanford	18,131	14,548	14,455	-20.
Agriculture	11,900	11,400	10,500	-11.

SOURCE: Employment Security Department

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state in employment and economic growth," Schau said. "Today, we're seeing a downward trend."

It's no secret layoffs at Hanford have brought about most of that decline.

Hanford's work force has dropped from 18,131 in August 1994 to 14,455 last month, a 20.2 percent decrease. Hence, the largest loss in nonfarm employment occurred in the service category, where 3,600 jobs have been

eliminated over the past year.

About 90 percent of the nonfarm job losses have occurred in Benton County, Schau said.

Benton County's unemployment rate jumped to 7.1 percent in August, compared with 4.6 percent a year ago. Franklin County reported a jobless rate of 7.4 percent, up from 6.3 percent last August.

Fewer home starts last month brought about a loss of 500 jobs in contract construction compared with August 1994. However, the wholesale and retail trade sector hired an additional 300 workers and 100 jobs were added in the transportation and public utility category.

"Excluding housing construction, secondary sectors of the local economy

appear to be holding their own, and in some cases have added job totals since a year ago," Schau said.

Other unemployment rates reported for the state are: Seattle-Bellevue-Everett metro area, 4.9 percent; Bellingham, 6.3; Bremerton, 5.8; Olympia, 5.7; Spokane, 4.8; Tacoma, 5.6; and Yakima, 10.5.

Also, Adams, 7.1 percent; Asotin, 4.6; Chelan-Douglas, 9.7; Clallam, 7.4; Clark, 4.2; Columbia, 6.7; Cowlitz, 6.5; Ferry, 8.6; Garfield, 2.6; Grant, 7.5; Grays Harbor, 9.7; Jefferson, 6; Kittitas, 7; Klickitat, 9.8; Lewis, 7.4; Lincoln, 4.4; Mason, 7; Okanogan, 9.1; Pacific, 9.1; Pend Oreille, 11.1; San Juan, 3.6; Skamania, 7.7; Skagit, 7.1; Stevens, 7.3; Wahkiakum, 5.5; Walla Walla, 4.5; and Whitman, 2.2.

